DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 049 840 PS 004 686

AUTHOR Emlen, Arthur C.
TITLE Neighborhood Family Day Care as a Child-Rearing Environment.
INSTITUTION Oregon State Univ., Portland.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Child Development (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 19 Nov 70
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Boston, Massachusetts, November 19, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns, Child Care Workers, Community Services, *Day Care Services, *Friendship, Interpersonal Relationship, Mother Attitudes, Motivation, Neighborhood, *Residential Care, Rewards, Social Relations, *Working Women

ABSTRACT

The field study reported examined the attitudes and behavior of working mothers and their neighborhood caregivers (nonrelatives). Data were obtained from interviews with 104 mother-sitter pairs, 39 of whom were friends when the arrangement began, and 65 of whom were strangers. The dynamics of mother-sitter relations prove to be dramatically different for the two groups. Between women who already know each other, friendship is apparently the bond that holds the day care arrangement together. Dissatisfactions may involve strains centering around status, dominance, and interpersonal issues, but may be tolerated because of friendship. By contrast, those who start out as strangers tend to develop a system of mutual satisfactions not associated with degree of friendship although friendship may later develop. Motivation for caregivers who sit for strangers was found to be personal role satisfaction, as well as economic. The goals and methods of the Day Care Neighbor Service, a 2-year demonstration project, are described. Through a creative use of consultation, social workers reach "day care neighbors" who, in turn, help potential users and givers of day care to find each other and to make satisfactory arrangements. The social impact of the service is discussed. Tables are included. (NH)

ED049840

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY DAY CARE AS A CHILD-REARING ENVIRONMENT

Arthur C. Emlen, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Social Work
Portland State University
Project Director, Field Study of
the Neighborhood Family Day Care
System

This paper was prepared for presentation at
the Annual Meeting of the National Association
for the Education of Young Children

Boston, Massachusetts

November 19, 1970

PS 004686

The Field Study is a research project of the Tri-County Community Council in cooperation with Portland State University and is supported by Child Welfare Research Grant #R-287 from the Children's Bureau, Office of Child Development, U. S. Department of Health, Education,and Welfare.

NEIGHBORHOOD FAMILY DAY CARE AS A CHILD-REARING ENVIRONMENT*

Arthur C. Emlen

In order to dramatize the issues for this paper I want to play a little with an analogy between family day care and the brood behavior of the brown-headed cowbird who lays her eggs in the nests of other birds. Family day care occurs when for some reason such as maternal employment a child is taken to the home of a nonrelative to spend part of his day. The other family's home is apt to be nearby in the neighborhood, and the care the result of a private arrangement made directly between the two families. Now the female cowbird is also a working mother who follows the cows or bison, and her mobility is made possible by an absence of a series of instincts: pairing, territory establishment, nest construction, brooding, and feeding.[1] Cowbirds select some surrogate nest-builder to sit on their eggs and raise their young. For use as a sitter they may pick some misleadingly attractive host, such as the robin, who rejects the strange eggs, or they pick a more tolerant home-body, such as the song sparrow, who cheerfully raises the mixed brood.[2] On this continent cowbirds have laid their eggs in the nests of some 206 different species of birds, though only half of these hosts (101) have been reported providing incubation of the eggs and successful rearing of the cowbird young.[3]

---

*This paper is based on reports of the Field Study of the Neighborhood Family Day Care System, which is funded by Child Welfare Research Grant #R-287 from the U. S. Children's Bureau. The Field Study is a project of the Tri-County Community Council in cooperation with Portland State University.

[1]Alden H. Miller, "Social Parasites Among Birds," Scientific Monthly, 62 (1946), 238-246.

[2]Herbert Friedmann, Host Relations of the Parasitic Cowbirds. Smithsonian Institution, U. S. National Museum Bulletin 233, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), pp. 72-73 and 168-171.

[3]Ibid., p. 38.

Though a successful adaptation, the cowbird's behavior is suspect and meets with disapproval. I should like to read to you a brief excerpt from The Burgess Bird Book for Children.[4] Though written fifty years ago it captures some attitudes that are still with us regarding the working mother and the care she finds for her children in the neighborhood.

> Having other things to attend to, or rather having other things to arouse his curiosity, Peter Rabbit did not visit the Old Orchard for several days. When he did it was to find the entire neighborhood quite upset. There was an indignation meeting in progress around the tree in which Chebec and his modest little wife had their home. How the tongues did clatter! Peter knew that something had happened, but though he listened with all his might he couldn't make head or tail of it.
>
> Finally Peter managed to get the attention of Jenny Wren. "What's happened?" demanded Peter. "What's all this fuss about?"
>
> Jenny Wren was so excited that she couldn't keep still an instant. Her sharp little eyes snapped, and her tail was carried higher than ever. "It's a disgrace! It's a disgrace to the whole feathered race, and something ought to be done about it!" sputtered Jenny. "I'm ashamed to think that such a contemptible creature wears feathers! I am so!"
>
> "But what's it all about?" demanded Peter impatiently. "Do keep still long enough to tell me. Who is this contemptible creature?"
>
> "Sally Sly," snapped Jenny Wren. "Sally Sly the Cowbird.

---

[4] Thornton W. Burgess, The Burgess Bird Book for Children (N.Y.: Grossett & Dunlap, 1919, 1947, 1965).

I hoped she wouldn't disgrace the Old Orchard this year, but she has. When Mr. and Mrs. Chebec returned from getting their breakfast this morning they found one of Sally Sly's eggs in their nest. They are terribly upset, and I don't blame them. If I were in their place I simply would throw that egg out. That's what I'd do, I'd throw that egg out!"

Peter was puzzled. He blinked his eyes and stroked his whiskers as he tried to understand what it all meant. "Who is Sally Sly, and what did she do that for?" he finally ventured.

"For goodness sake, Peter Rabbit, do you mean to tell me you don't know who Sally Sly is?" Then without waiting for Peter to reply, Jenny rattled on. "She's a member of the Blackbird family and she's the laziest, most good-for-nothing, sneakiest, most unfeeling and most selfish wretch I know of!" Jenny paused long enough to get her breath. "She laid that egg in Chebec's nest because she is too lazy to build a nest of her own and too selfish to take care of her own children."[5]

Jenny Wren's indignation has its counterpart in the attitude of society not only toward maternal employment, but also toward private family day care arrangements which are stereotyped in such disparaging terms as "makeshift arrangements," "babysitting," or "neglect." In another paper I have argued that the evidence does not support such charges as generalizations about the population or the fantasy that these private arrangements can be put out of business by licensing or by competition from new and better day care facilities.[6] Private family day care has been providing for close to 20%

---

[5]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[6]Arthur C. Emlen, "Realistic Planning for the Day Care Consumer," Social Work Practice, 1970 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp.127-142.

of the children of working mothers,[7] and it is reasonable to assume that this type of child care will persist.

Without indignation, then, let us examine some patterns of behavior of working mothers and their neighborhood caregivers or sitters, which we have discovered in the Field Study. In looking at family day care as a child-rearing environment, the Field Study has stepped back from questions about the response of the child to day care, important as that is, and has paid attention rather to the life circumstances, attitudes, and behaviors primarily of the mother and the caregiver, for it is these behaviors and conditions that both create and constitute the proximal environment for the child. Then, in the second half of this paper we shall shift our attention to the ecology of the private family day care arrangement, discussing its relationship to its environment, the neighborhood, for in the matchmaker role of neighbors we believe we have found a way of reaching and assisting those who make private family day care arrangements.

Arrangements Between Friends and Arrangements Between Strangers

One of the most intriguing determinants of family day care behavior is the nature of the relationship between mother and caregiver. Since by definition family day care involves the use of nonrelatives, we are talking about a population of persons who turn beyond kinship resources and who neither benefit from nor are constrained by kinship norms about helping with child care. The norms and role expectations governing behavior between neighbors, between friends, and between strangers become relevant but by no means clear when these relations are mixed. If the mother and caregiver are already friends, how do they combine their friendship with the business aspect of the arrange-

---

[7] Seth Low and Pearl G. Spindler, Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers in the United States, Children's Bureau Publication No. 461-1968 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), p.71.

ment, which is after all a more or less contractual agreement to exchange money for service? Or if they are strangers with only the briefest of acquaintance when they contract the child care arrangement, do they remain businesslike and distant or do they become friends who increasingly share a social life over and beyond the instrumental requirements for maintaining the arrangement? Indeed, how do they maintain the relationship?

Let me now present some data based on 104 mother-sitter pairs of whom 39 defined themselves as "friends" when the arrangement began, and 65 of whom were "strangers" whose contact with one another was a response to a classified newspaper ad or was engineered by a friend or some other third party acting in a matchmaking capacity. All of the analyses I am going to present were done separately for these two groups -- friends and strangers -- because the differences between arrangements that began between friends and arrangements that began between strangers proved to be of overriding significance. The dynamics of mother-sitter relations are dramatically different for the two groups whose origins were different.

But what is friendship? In the first place, our 39 friends were friends because they both said they knew each other already. The degree of friendship or "closeness" between the two families was measured by the scales shown in Table 1. Naturally, those who began as friends scored higher on this scale than did the strangers. But the average duration of the arrangement at time of interview when the data were collected was six months, giving ample time for old friendships to founder or new ones to develop, and this is exactly what happened.

Table 1 here

Now for strangers, a developing friendship or closeness between the

PS 004686

Table 1

SITTER'S VIEW OF INTER-FAMILY CLOSENESS IN THIS ARRANGEMENT

	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor Loadings
The mother is one of my closest friends.	-0.31	1.94	.82
Our families often get together.	-1.26	1.85	.82
I only see the mother when she leaves or picks up her child.	-0.08	2.05	-.75
The mother and I enjoy getting together.	+0.39	1.94	.74
The mother and I sit and talk to each other for hours.	-0.58	2.04	.74
Our families are so close it's as if we were relatives.	-1.58	1.65	.70
I often visit with this child or have him visit me even when I am not babysitting him.	-0.15	2.02	.66
One reason I babysit for this mother is that our children are friends.	-0.57	2.03	.54

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

	Sitters	Mothers
Friends	.94	.85
Strangers	.89	.87
Total	.89	.89

Mean and Standard Deviation

	Sitters		Mothers	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Friends	3.7	11.39	4.3	8.93
Strangers	-8.1	9.19	-6.4	8.68
Total	-3.6	11.55	-2.4	10.15

families was associated with various validity measures and with an enduring arrangement, but with little else. For strangers the degree of friendship was almost completely independent of the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction experienced in the arrangement. See Table 2. Not so for arrangements between friends, in which inter-family closeness was associated with a variety of measures of sitter's satisfaction. See Table 3. The same pattern was found for mothers and sitters alike.

Tables 2 and 3 here

For the most part the two groups of caregivers did not differ significantly in the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction they reported on a variety of scales. It was only in the patterns that the story is told. Two variables were found to be at the center of slightly overlapping clusters of correlations. They are the emotional drain and role strain. The scales used to measure them are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Tables 4 and 5 here

For each of the two groups separately, friends and strangers, a multiple regression shows how much of the variance of role strain or of emotional drain was accounted for, which predictors entered first, and which additional variables contribute significantly to the prediction. In the pie chart, a complete circle would represent 100% of the variance.

Looking first at the caregivers who sat for friends, I interpret the results shown in Figures 1 and 2 as follows. For friends the sources of strain and drain appear to have two elements that distinguish their arrange-

Table 2

Care Givers for Strangers N = 65

SITTER'S VIEW OF INTER-FAMILY CLOSENESS IN THIS ARRANGEMENT	
Sources of Satisfaction	
Mother interviewer's rating: Mo's satisfaction with the si-ch relationship.	-.33
Mother's job satisfaction and job market advantage.	-.32
Validity Measures	
How sitter feels she gets along with the mother.	.53
Sitter's report of the length of time she has known the mother.	.49
Duration of this arrangement at time of interview.	.47
Mother's view of inter-family closeness in this arrangement.	.45
Sitter interviewer's rating: Resembles an "extended family" arrangement.	.43
Sitter interviewer's rating: Resembles an "alliance" arrangement.	.42
Total duration of this arrangement.	.39
Sitter interviewer's rating: Resembles a "commercial" arrangement.	-.32

Table 3

Care Givers for Friends N = 39

SITTER'S VIEW OF INTER-FAMILY CLOSENESS IN THIS ARRANGEMENT	
Sources of Satisfaction	
Sitter interviewer's rating: Si's satisfaction with the si-mo relationship.	.69
Sitter's satisfaction with this mother's concern for her child.	.61
Sitter interviewer's rating: Si's satisfaction with the mo-ch relationship.	.59
Sitter's dissatisfaction with this mother's long hours and lack of planfulness.	-.38
Sitter's disadvantage in the babysitting market.	.37
Sitter's own rating of her satisfaction with this arrangement.	.36
Mother interviewer's rating: Mo's satisfaction with the mo-ch relationship.	.32
Sitter's approval of this mother's discipline.	.32
Sitter's strain from competing requirements of family and sitter roles.	-.32
Validity Measures	
Sitter interviewer's rating: Resembles a "commercial" arrangement.	-.72
Mother's view of inter-family closeness in this arrangement.	.65
How sitter feels she gets along with the mother.	.65
Sitter interviewer's rating: Resembles an "extended family" arrangement.	.61
Sitter's lack of continuity in day care giver role.	.36
Sitter interviewer's rating: Resembles an "alliance" arrangement.	-.34
Mother interviewer's rating: Resembles a "commercial" arrangement.	-.34

Table 4

SITTER'S FEELING THAT CARING FOR THIS MOTHER'S CHILD IS AN EMOTIONAL DRAIN

	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor Loadings	
The children are too much for me.	-2.26	0.85		.78
I have trouble with her children because they are so spoiled.	-1.90	1.41	.77	
I like the way her children behave.	+1.65	1.06	-.58	
Mothers are always pleased with the way I have things fixed up to take care of children.	+1.55	0.84	-.58	
Her child gets on my nerves more often than I'd like.	-1.80	1.32	.57	
I get tired of the mother talking about her trouble with the child at home.	-2.03	0.95		.54
Her child is a real pleasure to be around.	+1.77	1.17	-.53	
Taking care of her child is more of a drain than I expected.	-1.85	1.29	.47	
I take children whether they are sick or not.	+0.56	1.75	-.40	
Some days I really feel ready to give the children up.	-0.90	1.78		.33
Her children are neat and clean.	+1.85	1.40		-.30

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

	Sitters
Friends	.78
Strangers	.75
Total	.76

Mean and Standard Deviation

	Sitters	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Friends	-16.5	8.61
Strangers	-19.0	6.98
Total	-18.1	7.69

Table 5

SITTER'S STRAIN FROM COMPETING REQUIREMENTS OF FAMILY AND SITTER ROLES

	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor Loadings
I just can't manage to keep the house the way I want to with children around all the time.	-0.48	1.87	-.71
I think a day care giver is usually not paid enough.	+0.10	1.77	-.62
I find that often the mother expects the sitter to do too much	-0.66	1.61	-.58
I'm not satisfied with the amount of money I can make babysitting.	-1.23	1.59	-.57
I find that my babysitting is hard on my own family.	-0.50	1.60	-.54
Mothers impose on sitters.	-0.46	1.66	-.51
My husband gets upset sometimes because he feels that I do more for mothers and children than I need to.	-0.73	1.81	-.35
Mothers are usually considerate of sitters.	+1.58	1.02	.33

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

	Sitters
Friends	.81
Strangers	.83
Total	.82

Mean and Standard Deviation

	Sitters	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Friends	-4.7	8.35
Strangers	-6.2	8.88
Total	-5.6	8.68

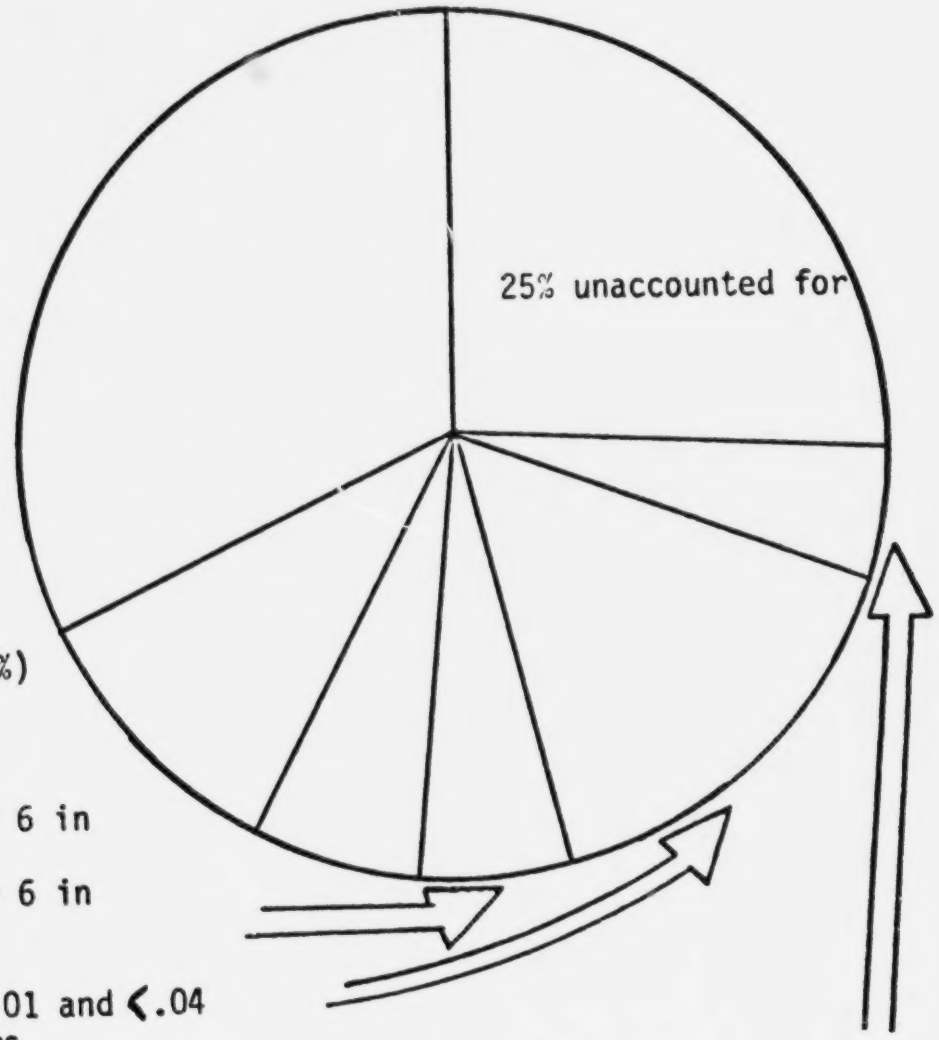
ments from arrangements made between strangers. One of these elements is the manifest content of dissatisfaction, which differs for strain and for drain. Role strain in sitting for friends involves a general dissatisfaction with the role and more specifically centers around the hours per day and the days per week the child is in care and around the planfulness and demandingness of the mother regarding those hours. It is as if the sitter got herself in for more than she had anticipated. Emotional drain centers around the child's adjustment as an issue. However, both strain and drain involve an element of interpersonal attitude concerning questions of dominance and status differences and the adaptive manner in which differences are reconciled within the relationship. The use of a friend as a regular caregiver may itself introduce discrepancies that are incompatible with the initial degree of equality in the friendship and that become sources of tension as time goes on.

Figures 1 and 2 here

For caregivers who sit for strangers, however, and who start out within the context of a contractual, instrumental, and less friendship-based relationship, the source of strain and drain is not the manner of relating but the possibility of exploitation, unfair exchange, or disadvantage in what must be a reciprocal balance of satisfactions. For this group, role strain is a function of feeling powerless or disadvantaged in the babysitting role. An economic element in this sense of disadvantage is also present. Emotional drain follows consistently with role strain and involves dissatisfaction with the mother's long hours and lack of planfulness, disapproval of the mother's discipline, and dissatisfaction with the child's adjustment, along with some

SITTER'S ROLE STRAIN

Friends



Giver role satisfaction (32%)

Dissatisfaction with mother's long hours and lack of planfulness (10%)

Number of hours per day children under 6 in this arrangement (6%)

Number of days per week children under 6 in this arrangement (5%)

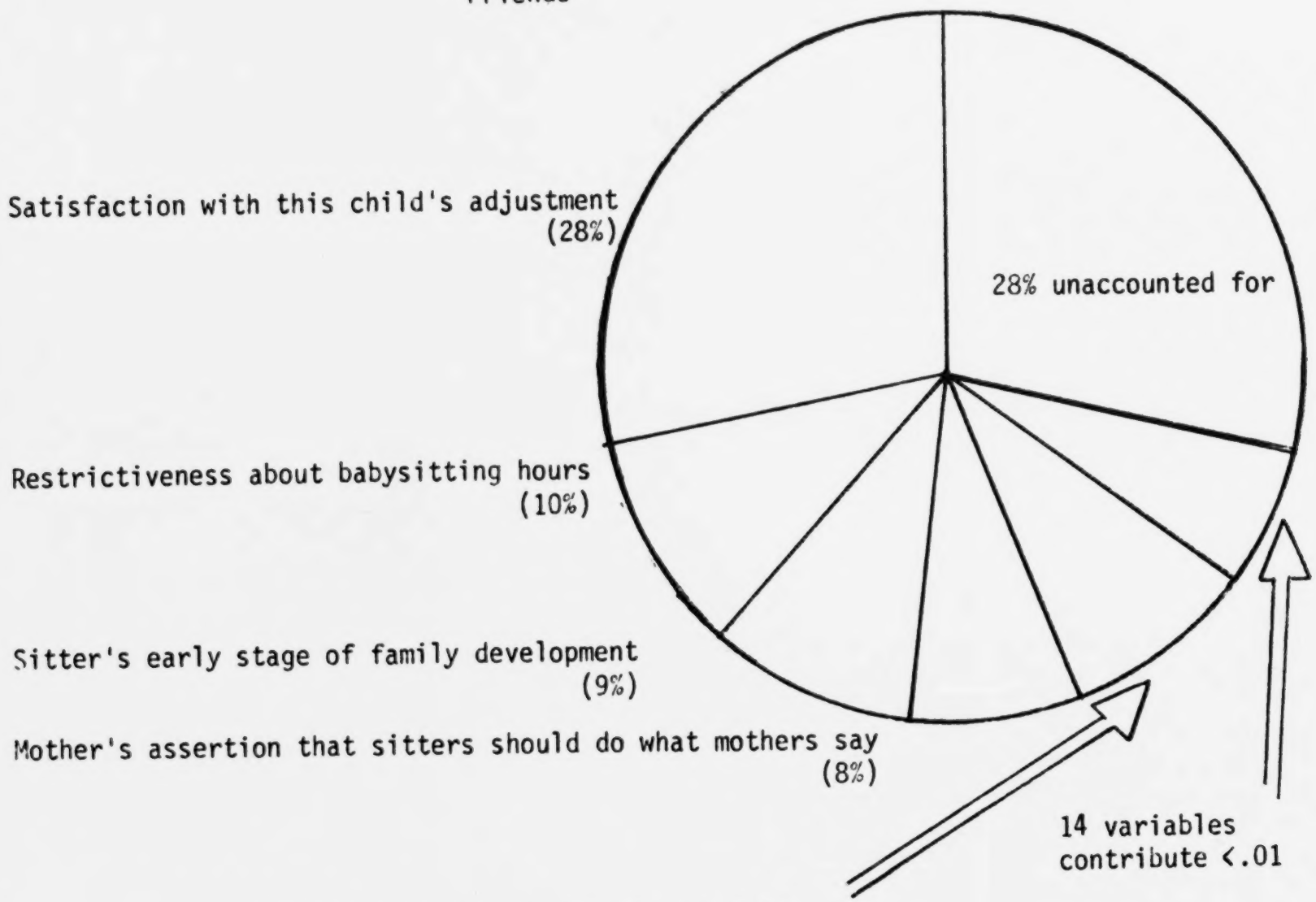
Variables Contributing ≥ .01 and < .04

Restrictiveness about babysitting hours.
Mother's assertion that sitters should do what mothers say.
Sitter role power vs. powerlessness.
Satisfaction with this mother's concern for her child.
Total number of children under 6 at sitter's.
Mother's family intactness and higher family income.
Satisfaction with this child's adjustment.
Expressive needs met by caring for children.
Sitter's own rating of her satisfaction with this arrangement.

10 variables contribute < .01

Figure 1

SITTER'S EMOTIONAL DRAIN


Friends
Satisfaction with this child's adjustment (28%)
28% unaccounted for
Restrictiveness about babysitting hours (10%)
Sitter's early stage of family development (9%)
Mother's assertion that sitters should do what mothers say (8%)
14 variables contribute <.01

Variables Contributing ≥ .01 and < .04

Sitter's own rating of her satisfaction with this arrangement.
Mother's SES.
How well mother says child gets along with sitter.
Satisfaction with this mother's concern for her child.
Strain from competing requirements of family and sitter roles.

Figure 2

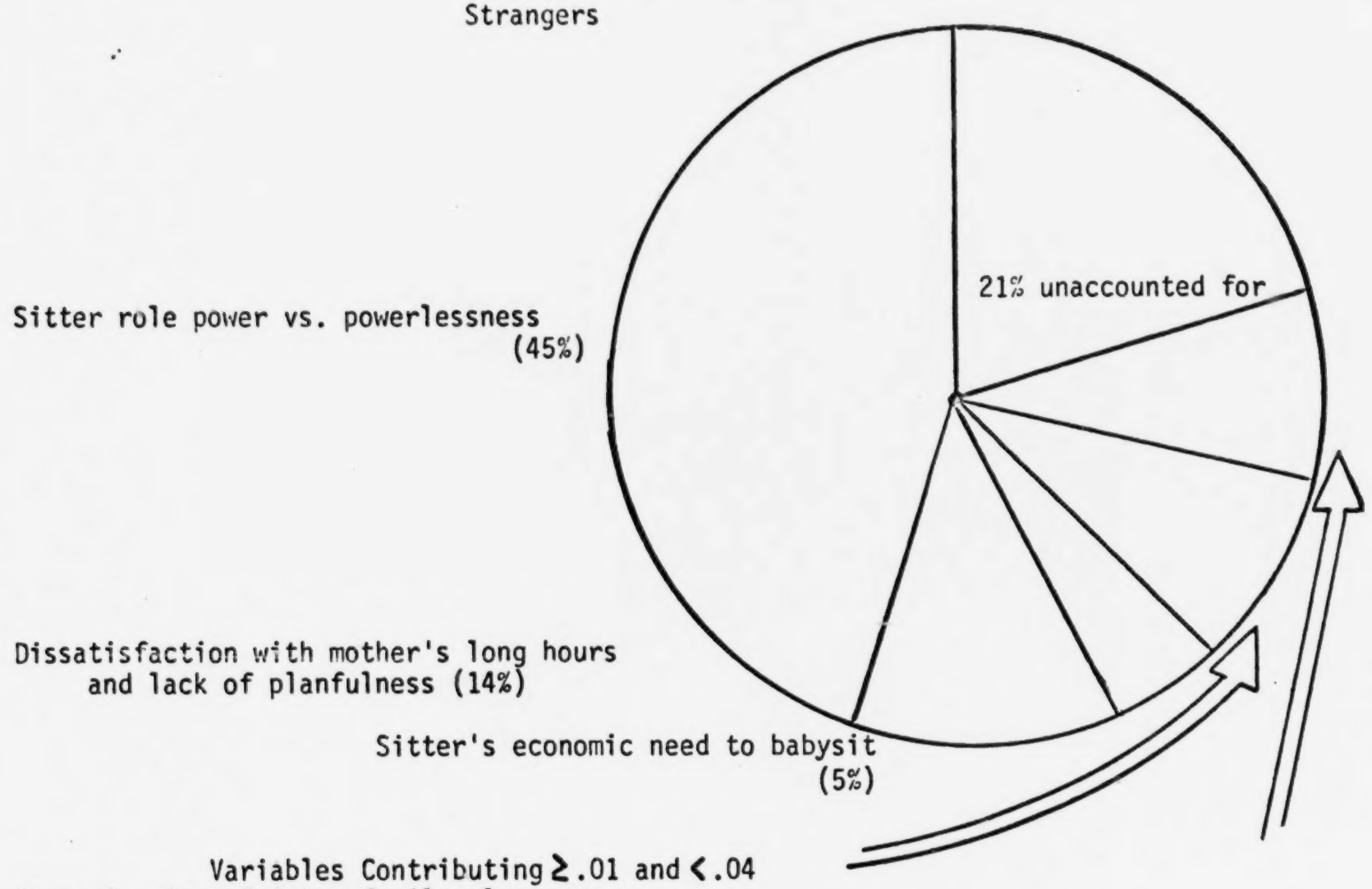
questioning of the mother's concern for her child as a source of dissatisfaction. Thus one sees for the caregivers who sit for strangers a feeling that caring for this child is an emotional drain expressed as a function of a set of possible dissatisfactions. Though the feeling of drain may reflect the pressures of child care, notice that the concerns are all around the child and child care.

Figures 3 and 4 here

I must at this point correct a misleading impression which may have been given in describing these analyses of the correlates of strain and drain. The degree of satisfaction reported by these sitters has been generally quite high. After all, we have been reporting the responses of those who succeeded in making relatively successful family day care arrangements. Thus what were identified are the potential sources of dissatisfaction which these caregivers endeavored successfully to avoid. We have identified some of the conditions under which mothers and caregivers make arrangements with which they will be satisfied.

I should now like to try to draw together into one conclusion the results of these two kinds of analyses--the comparison of the patterns of correlations, and the comparison of the four multiple regressions. It would appear that in arrangements that begin between women who have known each other before the arrangement begins, friendship is the bond or social glue that holds the arrangement together. The degree of continuing friendship is associated with the degree of satisfaction with the arrangement. On the other hand dissatisfaction threatens the relationship as well as the arrangement. Furthermore, the strains and drains of a day care arrangement between friends seem to involve problems of status, dominance, and interpersonal issues. It may well be

SITTER'S ROLE STRAIN


Strangers
Sitter role power vs. powerlessness (45%)
21% unaccounted for
Dissatisfaction with mother's long hours and lack of planfulness (14%)
Sitter's economic need to babysit (5%)

Variables Contributing ≥ .01 and < .04

Sitter's view of inter-family closeness.
Number of hours per day children under 6 in this arrangement.
Total number of children under 6 at sitter's.
Sitter's emotional drain.

16 variables contribute < .01

Figure 3

SITTER'S EMOTIONAL DRAIN

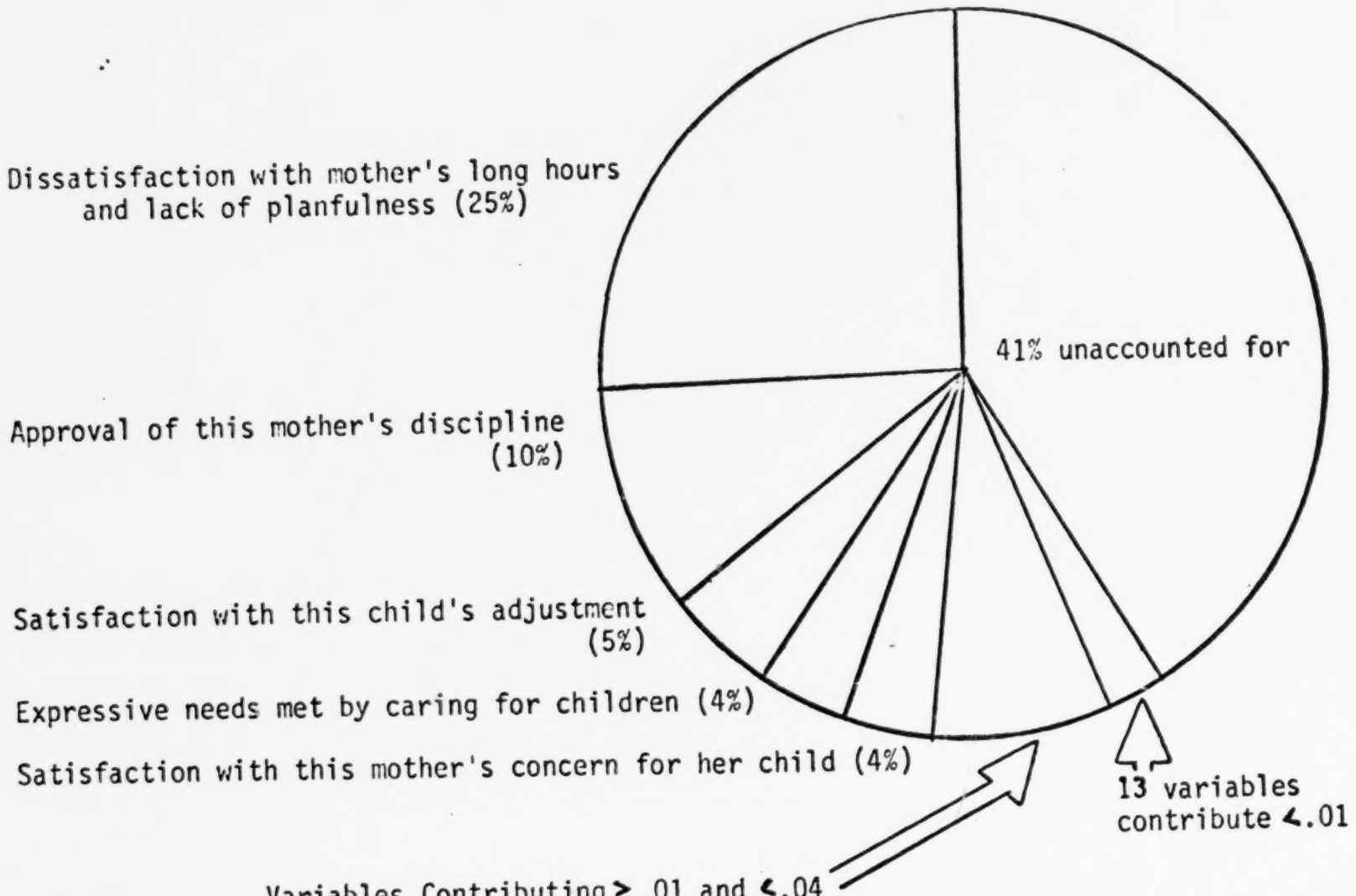

Strangers
Dissatisfaction with mother's long hours and lack of planfulness (25%)
41% unaccounted for
Approval of this mother's discipline (10%)
Satisfaction with this child's adjustment (5%)
Expressive needs met by caring for children (4%)
Satisfaction with this mother's concern for her child (4%)
13 variables contribute <.01
Variables Contributing ≥.01 and <.04
Mother's own rating of her satisfaction with this arrangement.
Total number of children under 6 at sitter's.
Strain from competing requirements of family and sitter roles.
Sitter's own rating of her satisfaction with this arrangement.
Mother's SES.

Figure 4

that when a previously existing relationship is the bond for a day care arrangement, dissatisfaction will be tolerated that would disrupt an arrangement between strangers. But our data bring to mind the old maxim about not doing business with friends. Respondents spoke of how hard it is to redefine the nature of a friendship relationship in a more contractual direction. Friends report difficulty in being able to communicate freely about problems that arise in the day care arrangement, especially if it does involve redefining the nature of the relationship. There is risk of losing a friend.

By contrast, those who start out with an initially contractual relationship between strangers tend to develop a more extensive system of mutual satisfactions which are not associated with the degree of friendship. Apparently for strangers it is the balanced exchange of satisfactions, the reciprocity, that serves as the bond. There is freedom to regulate the degree of closeness or distance, and the norms more clearly encourage discussing the practical, instrumental conditions of the arrangement, not only from the beginning but as problems arise. Within the contractual context of the relationship, friendships do develop, and when they do they provide an extra bonus; the closeness is associated with an enduring arrangement.

The implications of the data were especially interesting to me because they contained some surprises. Initial impressions and hypotheses formulated a few years ago led us to expect that the most satisfactory type of family day care arrangement and one that provided the child with the most favorable environment would be that made between friends in which the closeness between the two families provided the child with a familiar situation, an "extended family"-like setting. Rather than go to an almost unknown and unfamiliar world of discrepant role expectations, he would have one world not two, a world of extensive interaction between the two families and of shared values and understandings. This type of arrangement does exist, but it tends not to

be as serviceable unless the friendship is strong and the level of satisfaction high.

On the other hand, since most family day care arrangements probably are not made between friends anyway but between strangers, it is of some comfort to know that this can be a favorable way for an arrangement to start and that reasonably satisfactory arrangements can be developed, in which a degree of friendship can arise, and in which the expressive needs of the child and the expressive needs of the sitter are met in a mutual way.

It should not be assumed that strangers provide a more favorable child-rearing situation than friends. A more apt interpretation is that friends can assume or take for granted what must become the manifest focus of interaction between strangers.

It might easily be assumed that caregivers who sit for strangers might be highly commercial in their orientation and motivation to give care. Three kinds of evidence point to a contrary conclusion, however, at least for the sample under consideration:

(1) A scale measuring sitter's perceived economic need to babysit was only moderately correlated with low family income. This is not surprising since if a woman's economic need to work were great she would not be performing the caregiving role which, for our sample, contributed less than $1,000 a year to family income.

(2) An analysis of the motivational correlates of the sitter's amount of day care business found the contributions of the expressive need to sit stronger and more pervasive than the economic need to sit. "Amount of day care business" was an index based on the number of children cared for and the income derived from it.

(3) The expressive need to babysit entered into the multiple regression of emotional drain for strangers negatively perhaps as an antidote to

emotional drain for those caregivers. In sum, at least for this sample, the caregivers did not appear as a mercenary lot, but rather as women who found the role gratifying. They seemed to enjoy taking care of children and were not simply doing it for money or as a favor for a friend.

The Neighborhood Holds the Key to Facilitating How Private Family Day Care Arrangements are Made

We have just taken a look at the lucky ones. They had child care arrangements with a median duration of over one year. Other Field Study samples had median durations of one, two, or three months. Many of the women described above had had a series of previous day care arrangements. Private family day care is beset by problems, and instability is one of them.

The Field Study tries to understand and deal with this problem of discontinuity for the child in private family day care. Our assumption is that arrangements can be stabilized by improving the conditions under which they are made. A point of entry was found by putting together four elements:

(1) The babysitting crises of working mothers who need help in finding child care;

(2) The potential resources of women motivated to give care;

(3) The matchmaking activities of certain neighbors; and

(4) Expert consultation for the matchmakers.

These are the elements of a new kind of day care service which we have been calling the Day Care Neighbor Service. The results of a two-year demonstration of the service, which have just been reported,[8] show that private family day care does not take place in a vacuum but within a neighborhood

---

[8] The results are described and evaluated in Arthur C. Emlen and Eunice L. Watson, Matchmaking in Neighborhood Day Care: A Descriptive Study of the Day Care Neighbor Service. Originally developed on a pilot basis by the Day Care Exchange Project (Child Welfare Demonstration Grant #D-135), the service was further developed by the Field Study of the Neighborhood Family Day Care System (Child Welfare Research Grant #R-287). Both of these grants have been from the U. S. Children's Bureau. The Director of the Day Care Neighbor Service is Alice H. Collins.

matchmaking system which can be strengthened.

The Day Care Neighbor Service is a different kind of day care service. It does not directly provide day care, it does not supervise day care, and it does not even require the day care consumer to make contact with an agency. The service makes it possible to intervene at the neighborhood level where families privately and without benefit of a social agency make day care arrangements with neighborhood "sitters" or caregivers. The approach is indirect and makes use of informal relationships to provide a service that is decentralized to the level of the neighborhood. The purpose of the service is to strengthen existing child care arrangements, recruit new day care givers, and facilitate the information and referral processes by which new arrangements are made.

The method of intervention[9] involves a creative use of consultation by social workers who avoid working directly with mothers or sitters; instead they provide consultation to "day care neighbors" who, in turn, help the potential users and givers of care to find each other and to make mutually satisfactory arrangements.

These neighborhood women are discovered in the act not only of giving child care themselves, but also of being helpful to their neighbors in meeting daily babysitting crises. In any neighborhood one is apt to find such home-centered women who know the other caregivers in their localities and who are actively interested in the lives of others. Responding at moments of need, they serve as a maximally available third party to help

---

[9]The method and technique of intervention have been described in Alice H. Collins, Eunice L. Watson, The Day Care Neighbor Service: A Handbook for the Organization and Operation of a New Approach to Family Day Care. (Portland: Tri-County Community Council, 1969).
See also Alice H. Collins, "Some Efforts to Improve Private Family Day Care," Children, 13 (July-August 1966), 135-140.
Alice H. Collins, Arthur C. Emlen, Eunice L. Watson, "The Day Care Neighbor Service: An Interventive Experiment," Community Mental Health Journal, 5 (June, 1969), 219-224.

neighbors with the process of making child care arrangements.

Thus the discovery that there exists a natural neighboring role in day care matters was capitalized on as the basis for building a service. More than a dozen day care neighbors were discovered and provided with skilled social work consultation in their homes and by telephone. They were paid a token fee of $25 a month. With this kind of support these day care neighbors were encouraged to continue, to improve, and to increase their neighboring activities. The social work consultants confined their contacts to the day care neighbors, and most of the day care neighbors continued to perform their roles for the duration of the demonstration, reaching a large number of private family day care arrangements.

Briefly, what were the results?

(1) Thirteen out of fifteen day care neighbors continued performing in their roles from the time they were recruited until termination of the demonstration.

(2) The service was replicated under partially new conditions showing that the success was not a fluke the first time.

(3) Despite variations in the number of requests that came to the various day care neighbors, all of them performed to some extent each of the four functions of the service: information and referral, recruitment, matchmaking, maintenance and education.

(4) Using the obtained volume figures as the best estimate of what the service can do and anticipating a full complement of 15 day care neighbors, one could expect in one year to receive 482 requests for day care from 346 care users for 554 children. These figures underestimate the total number of children reached by the service. If one counts also the caregivers' own children, a conservative estimate would place at more than 882 the number of children's lives that the Day Care Neighbor Service would have

the capability of reaching indirectly within the course of a year. See Table 6.

Table 6 here

Of these user requests approximately 78% would result in a completed day care arrangement, and 49% would result in arrangements matched by a day care neighbor. Although significant variation was found in the matchmaking styles and success ratios of the day care neighbors, the percentage of requests resulting in an arrangement one way or another remained stable with little variation. We concluded that the service facilitated the way in which arrangements are made but did not increase their numbers.

(5) The service succeeded in reaching the target population. Regarding the applicability of the service, we found that it:

a. Reaches the users of full-time, part-time and irregular day care arrangements made both for maternal employment and for other special reasons.

b. Reaches both home care and family day care, but especially the latter.

c. Reaches arrangements made for infants, preschoolers and school age children, but especially for the child under six.

d. Reaches women who can be recruited to provide day care in their own homes.

e. Reaches day care arrangements early in the arrangement process and provides some limited knowledge of them over the continuing period of time.

f. Reaches the children who experience repeated discontinuity of child care.

Table 6

The Estimated Number of Persons Who Can Be Reached by the Day Care Neighbor Service

	Totals for the 24 month demonstration	Monthly Average per DCN	Yearly Average per DCN	Yearly Estimate for unit of 15 DCNs
Number of user requests	589	2.68	32	482
Number of care users	422	1.92	23	346
Number of children (users)	677	3.08	37	554
Number of caregiver requests	272	1.24	15	223
Number of caregivers	200	.91	11	164
Number of caregivers' own children under 12 (estimated from panel study data)	400	1.82	22	328
Number of children reached	1077	4.90	59	882

g. Reaches some instances of abuse, neglect, and inadequate supervision that are visible within the neighborhood.

The service is not a universal method, however, for reaching those who make day care arrangements. The service has the following limitations with respect to its applicability:

a. Day care neighboring tends to be territorially specialized, taking on the characteristics of the neighborhood, whether an apartment building, a trailer court, or an established residential area, and extending mainly to the network of associations that the neighbor has. Thus the reach of a Day Care Neighbor Service is limited to whatever socioeconomic and ethnic groups are a part of the system of contacts of the neighbors within the service. Furthermore, within a given geographic area there may be inadequate coverage, that is, not enough day care neighbors.

b. Not all day care users make their day care arrangements through an intermediary, whether a day care neighbor, friend, or relative. Some turn directly to a friend and ask her to take the child, while others respond to newspaper ads. In two independent samples studied in the Field Study, approximately one-third of the day care arrangements involved the use of some kind of a third party in facilitating the making of the arrangement. Day care neighbors are third-party intermediaries of an informal variety. Presumably many day care consumers would prefer other approaches to making arrangements.

c. The Day Care Neighbor Service is applicable only to those who contract privately for their day care arrangements. This involves an exchange of money for services and independent selection of

the child care arrangement by the day care consumer. Again, many consumers prefer formal referral channels and the professionally developed and educationally enriched day care programs. Furthermore, many need the services afforded by professional agencies.

The effectiveness of the Day Care Neighbor Service was not evaluated. It would be difficult to assess, of course, because the intervention adds such a small increment of change into the natural situation it is designed to affect. Some social programs create powerful new environments designed to have a massive impact upon a small number of persons, and the results are apt to be dramatic. By contrast as an instrument of change the Day Care Neighbor Service is designed to achieve limited results with a large number of neighborhood contacts with a small unit cost. It operates on the principle of making maximum use of the least effort necessary to strengthen ongoing social processes without disturbing the neighborhood status of the behavior involved. Though it reaches systems of behavior that have been relatively inaccessible to organized day care programs, the noticeable effect may be small when the objective is, for example, to help families to make better day care decisions than they otherwise might, or to provide a child with a more favorable and stable situation than he otherwise might have.

It is always tempting to believe that results are attributable to the power of the intervention, but the results of the Day Care Neighbor Service may also be seen as attributable to the effective use of the service by the givers and users of day care. And the outcome of the day care arrangement is probably even more importantly the result of interactions between caregiver and care user. This point is illustrated in Figure 5. The outcome data illustrated in the figure represent the effects of:

(1) the input from the service (that is the interventions of the day care neighbors and their consultants),

(2) the contribution of additional referral sources in the community,

(3) the use of the service,

(4) the role behaviors of caregivers and care users vis-a-vis each other, as determined by

(5) their own life circumstances, attitudes and behavior patterns.

Figure 5 here

It is important to recognize that the results reported represent a product of the entire system of behaviors shown in Figure 5. The evaluation only purported to show that the Day Care Neighbor Service "works" as a part of that system. Indeed, it is the operation of the system that was assessed in evaluating the feasibility of the program model.

To return to the original analogy, whether or not the cowbird and the song sparrow succeed in fledging the cowbird's young may depend on how well Peter Rabbit can get Jenny Wren to help out in the Old Orchard instead of just scolding.

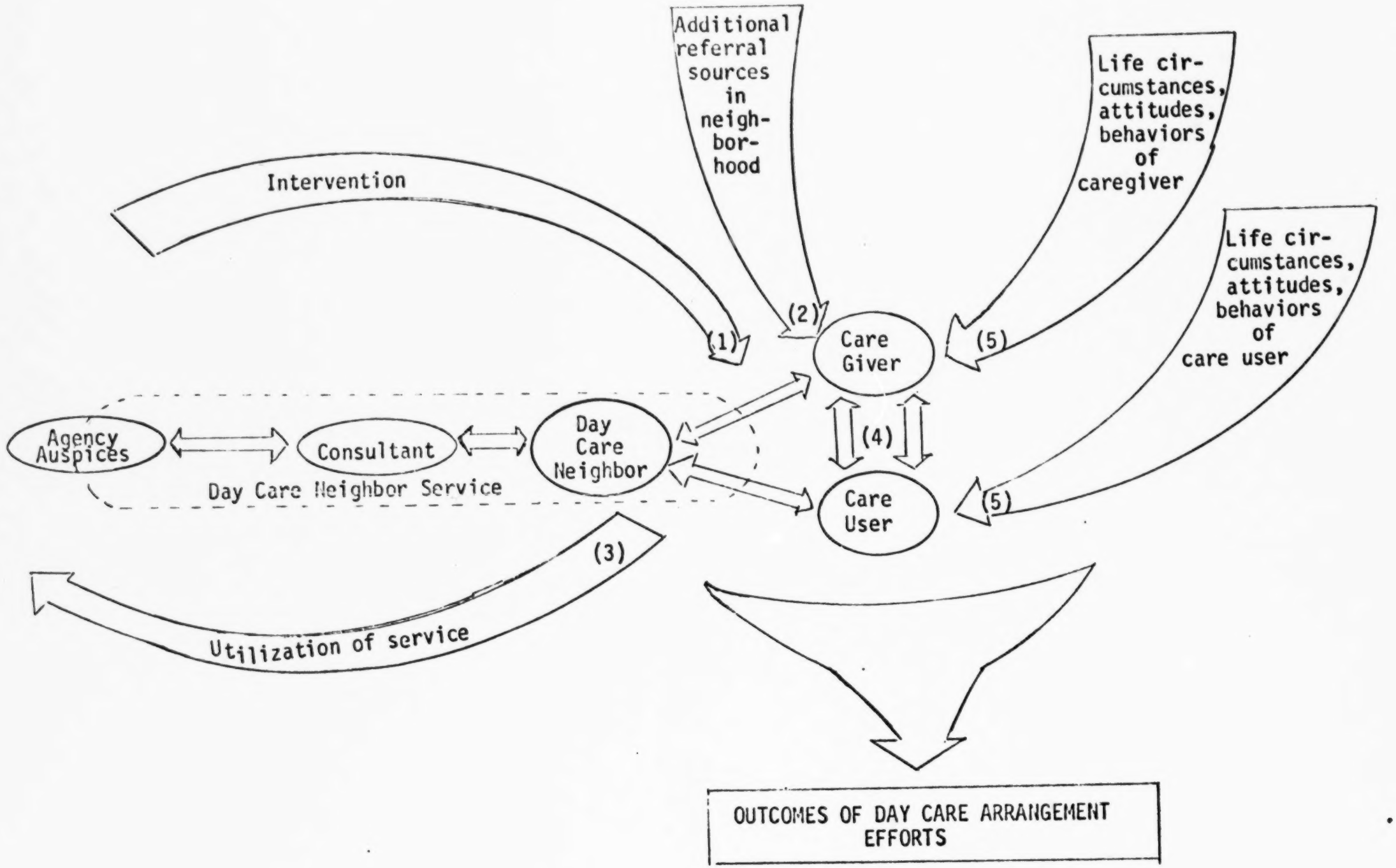


Figure 5. The System of Behaviors that Lead to Arrangement Outcomes